# Reasons to Fear U.S.

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September 7, 2003

Amid the aftershocks of recent suicide bombings in Baghdad and Najaf, and countless other horrors since Sept. 11, 2001, it is easy to understand why many believe that the world has entered a new and frightening "age of terror," the title of a recent collection of essays by Yale University scholars and others.

However, two years after 9/11, the United States has yet to confront the roots of terrorism, has waged more war than peace and has continually raised the stakes of international confrontation.

On 9/11, the world reacted with shock and horror, and sympathy for the victims. But it is important to bear in mind that for much of the world, there was a further reaction: "Welcome to the club."

For the first time in history, a Western power was subjected to an atrocity of the kind that is all too familiar elsewhere.

Any attempt to make sense of events since then will naturally begin with an investigation of American power — how it has reacted and what course it may take.

Within a month of 9/11, Afghanistan was under attack. Those who accept elementary moral standards have some work to do to show that the United States and Britain were justified in bombing

Afghans to compel them to turn over people suspected of criminal atrocities, the official reason given when the bombings began.

Then, in September, 2002, the most powerful state in history announced a new National Security Strategy, asserting that it will maintain global hegemony permanently.

Any challenge will be blocked by force, the dimension in which the United States reigns supreme.

At the same time, the war drums began to beat to mobilize the population for an invasion of Iraq.

And the campaign opened for the mid-term congressional elections, which would determine whether the administration would be able to carry out its radical international and domestic agenda.

The final days of 2002, foreign policy specialist Michael Krepon wrote, were "the most dangerous since the 1962 Cuban missile crisis," which historian Arthur Schlesinger described, reasonably, as "the most dangerous moment in human history."

Krepon's concern was nuclear proliferation in an "unstable nuclear-proliferation belt stretching from Pyongyang to Baghdad," including "Iran, Iraq, North Korea and the Indian subcontinent."

Bush administration initiatives in 2002 and 2003 have only increased the threats in and near this unstable belt.

The National Security Strategy declared that the United States, alone, has the right to carry out "preventive war" — preventive, not pre-emptive — using military force to eliminate a perceived threat, even if invented or imagined.

Preventive war is, very simply, the "supreme crime" condemned at the Nuremberg trials of Nazi war criminals.

From early September, 2002, the Bush administration issued grim warnings about the danger that Saddam Hussein posed to the United States, with broad hints that Saddam was linked to Al Qaeda and involved in the Sept. 11 attacks. The propaganda assault helped enable the administration to gain some support from a frightened population for the planned invasion of a country

known to be virtually defenceless — and a valuable prize, at the heart of the world's major energy system.

Last May, after the putative end of the war in Iraq, President Bush landed on the deck of the USS Abraham Lincoln and declared that he had won a "victory in the war on terror (by having) removed an ally of Al Qaeda."

But Sept. 11, 2003, will arrive with no credible evidence for the alleged link between Saddam and his bitter enemy Osama bin Laden. And the only known link between the victory and terror is that the invasion of Iraq seems to have increased Al Qaeda recruitment and the threat of terror.

The Wall Street Journal recognized that Bush's carefully staged aircraft-carrier extravaganza "marks the beginning of his 2004 re-election campaign," which the White House hopes "will be built as much as possible around national security themes."

If the administration lets domestic issues prevail, it is in deep trouble.

Meanwhile, bin Laden remains at large. And the source of the post-Sept. 11 anthrax terror is unknown — an even more striking failure, given that the source is assumed to be domestic, perhaps even from a federal weapons lab.

The Iraqi weapons of mass destruction are still missing, too.

For the second 9/11 anniversary and beyond, we basically have two choices. We can march forward with confidence that the global enforcer will drive evil from the world, much as the president's speechwriters declare, plagiarizing ancient epics and children's tales.

Or we can subject the doctrines of the proclaimed grand new era to scrutiny, drawing rational conclusions, perhaps gaining some sense of the emerging reality.

The wars that are contemplated in the war on terror are to go on for a long time.

"There's no telling how many wars it will take to secure freedom in the homeland," the president announced last year.

That's fair enough. Potential threats are limitless. And there is strong reason to believe that they are becoming more severe as a result of Bush administration lawlessness and violence.

We also should be able to appreciate recent comments on the matter by Ami Ayalon, the 1996–2000 head of Shabak, Israel's General Security Service, who observed that "those who want victory" against terror without addressing underlying grievances "want an unending war."

The observation generalizes in obvious ways.

The world has good reason to watch what is happening in Washington with fear and trepidation.

The people who are best placed to relieve those fears, and to lead the way to a more hopeful and constructive future, are the people of the United States, who can shape the future.